

# Abraham (part 1 of 2)

**Description:** This lesson covers the most important events of the life of Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) based on the Quran and *Sunnah*.

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## Objectives

- To learn the most important events of the life of Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) based on the Quran and *Sunnah*.

## Arabic Terms

- *Sunnah* - The word *Sunnah* has several meanings depending on the area of study however the meaning is generally accepted to be, whatever was reported that the Prophet said, did, or approved.

Prophet Abraham, known as Ibrahim in Arabic, was born around 2,000 years before Jesus close to Ur, 200 miles from Baghdad. The young Ibrahim questioned the religion surrounding him.

Like those around him, his father Azar was an idol worshipper, possibly even a sculptor of them; hence Abraham's first call was directed to him. Born with a child's uncorrupted belief that the world has a Lord, Ibrahim was instinctively aware of the truth about Him.

**“And mention in the Book (the Quran) Abraham, indeed he was a man of truth, a Prophet.”**

Ibrahim began questioning his father's idol-worship,

**“When he said to his father: O my father! Why do you worship that which neither hears, nor sees, nor can avail you in anything? O my father! Lo! There has come to me of knowledge that which came not to you. So follow me, and I will lead you on a right path. O my father! Worship not Satan. Lo! Satan is a rebel to the Beneficent. O my father! Lo! I fear lest a punishment from the Beneficent should overtake you so that you become a comrade of Satan.”**[\[1\]](#)

**“Do you take idols as gods?” (Quran 6:74)**

The reply from his father was natural rejection of a challenge by another not only much younger than him, but also his offspring, a challenge made against years of tradition and norm.

**He (the father) said: “Do you reject my gods, O Abraham? If you do not stop, I will indeed stone you. So get away from me safely before I punish you.” (Quran 19:46)**

Ibrahim stayed firm in his stance on misdirected worship of his father and those that surrounded him. In his rejection of idolatry Ibrahim began his spiritual journey to the Lord of the Worlds. Contemplating on the universe shifted his attention from the creation to the Creator, and with it came the opportunity to further his call that the only deity which deserved worship was God, Almighty. The Quran tells us:

**“When the night grew dark upon him, he beheld a star, and said, ‘This is my Lord!’ But when it set, he said: ‘I love not things that set.’” (Quran 6:76)**

Ibrahim had presented the example of the stars to them, so incomprehensible to them as to be seen as something greater than man with attributes of various powers he has not. But in the setting of the stars Ibrahim saw their inability to appear as they desired, but rather only at night.

Another example of something even greater is a heavenly body more beautiful, and larger, visible in daytime as well! However, the horizon cut off its majesty:

**“And when he saw the moon rising up, he exclaimed: ‘This is my Lord.’ But when it set, he said: ‘Unless my Lord guides me, I surely shall become one of the folk who are astray.’” (Quran 6:77)**

Then as his culminating example, he brought forth to contemplate something even bigger, one of the most powerful objects of creation, without which life itself was an impossibility.

**And when he saw the sun rising, he cried: “This is my Lord! This is greater!” But when the sun set, he said, “O my people! Surely I am free from that which you associate with God. Verily, I have turned my face towards Him Who has created the heavens and the earth, away from idolatry, and I am not of those who associate others with God.” (Quran 6:78)**

Thus Ibrahim proved to his satisfaction and the consternation of his peers that the Lord of the worlds was not to be found in the creations that their idols represented, but was, rather, the entity who created them and everything which they could see and perceive; that the Lord does not necessarily need to be seen in order to be worshipped. He is an All-Able Lord, not bound by limitations as the creations found in this world are.

**“And We verily gave Ibrahim of old his proper course.”[\[2\]](#)**

However, despite these proofs his people still argued with him.[\[3\]](#) They said:

**“Nay, but we found our wise fathers acting in this way.”[\[4\]](#)**

He denied that one’s ancestors are necessarily right, or that we should slavishly follow their customs, by saying:

**“Verily you and your fathers were in plain error.”**

His message was simple:

**“Worship God, and keep your duty to Him; that is better for you if you did but know. You worship instead of God only idols, and you only invent a lie. Lo! Those whom you worship instead of God own no provision for you. So seek your provision from God, and worship Him, and give thanks to Him, (for) to Him you will be brought back.”**

**[5]**

Then the time came when preaching had to be accompanied with physical action. Ibrahim planned a bold and decisive blow at idolatry, a plan which had hinted involved their idols,

**“And, by God, I shall circumvent your idols after you have gone away and turned your backs.” (Quran 21:57)**

It was time for a religious festival, for which they would leave town, and Ibrahim was invited to attend. So, when he glanced up at the stars and excused himself, saying;

**“Lo! I feel sick!” (Quran 37:89)**

his peers left without him. As the temple was deserted, this became his opportunity. He made his way their, approaching the gold-plated idols, which had elaborate meals the priests had left in front of them. Mocking them in disbelief:

**“He turned to their gods and said: ‘Will you not eat? What ails you that you speak not?’” (Quran 37:91-2 )**

After all what could delude man to worship gods of his own carving?

**“Then he attacked them, striking with his right hand.” (Quran 37:93)**

The Quran tells us,

**“he reduced them to fragments, all except the chief of them.” (Quran 21:58)**

When the temple priests returned, they were shocked to see the sacrilege, the destruction of the temple. They were wondering who could have done this to their idols when someone mentioned the name of Ibrahim, explaining that he used to speak ill of them. When they called him to their presence, it was for Ibrahim to show them their foolishness:;

**“He said: Worship you that which you yourselves do carve when God has created you and what you make?” (Quran 37:95)**

Their anger was mounting; in no mood for being preached to, they got straight to the point:

**“Is it you who has done this to our gods, O Ibrahim?” (Quran 21:62)**

But Ibrahim had left the largest idol untouched for a reason:

**“He said: ‘But this, their chief has done it. So question them, if they can speak!’”(Quran 21:63)**

When Ibrahim so challenged them, they were cast into confusion. They blamed each other for not guarding the idols and, refusing to meet his eyes, said:

**“Indeed you know well these speak not!”(Quran 21:65)**

So Ibrahim pressed his case.

**“He said: ‘Worship you then instead of God that which cannot profit you at all, nor harm you? Fie on you and all that you worship instead of God! Have you then no sense?’”(Quran 21:67)**

The accusers had become the accused. They were accused of logical inconsistency, and so had no answer for Ibrahim. Because Ibrahim’s reasoning was unanswerable, their response was rage and fury, and they condemned Ibrahim to be burned alive,

**“Build for him a building and fling him in the red hot fire.” (Quran 37:97)**

The townspeople all helped in gathering wood for the fire, until it was the largest fire they had ever seen. The young Ibrahim submitted to the fate chosen for him by the Lord of the Worlds. He did not lose faith, rather the trial made him stronger. Ibrahim did not flinch in the face of a fiery death even at this tender age; rather his last words before entering it were,

*“God is sufficient for me and He is the best disposer of affairs.” (Saheeh Al-Bukhari)*

Here again is an example of Ibrahim proving true to the trials he faced. His belief in the True God was tested here, and he proved that he was even prepared to surrender his existence to the call of God. His belief was evidenced by his action.

God had not willed that this be the fate of Ibrahim, for he had a great mission ahead of him. Thus He saved Ibrahim as a sign for him and his people as well..

**“We said: ‘O fire, be coolness and peace for Ibrahim. And they wished to set a snare for him, but We made them the greater losers.”**

Ibrahim escaped the fire unharmed.

After years of persecution, Ibrahim and his family likely migrated to Harran in southeastern Turkey to continue preaching the truth. While in Harran, Ibrahim continued to preach to his father, but his father was equally persistent in his rejection. Finally, he said,

**“If you cease not, I shall surely stone you. Depart from me a long while!”**

Banished by his father, Ibrahim parted with kind words,

**“Peace be to you! I shall ask forgiveness of my Lord for you. Lo! He is ever gracious to me. I shall withdraw from you and that to which you pray beside God, and I shall pray to my Lord. It may be that, in prayer to my Lord, I shall not be unblest.”**

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Endnotes:

[\[1\]](#) Quran 19:41-50

[\[2\]](#) Quran 21:51

[\[3\]](#) Quran 6:80

[\[4\]](#) Quran 26:69-76

[\[5\]](#) Quran 29:16-19

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